

is not the greatest pleasure,
for women or for men,
the excitation of the other?

is this the tragic difference between
the fantasy of rape and its reality?

observe the lonely man
left out of the scene,
his palms and face pressed against
an invisible wall.
who has not known that wall?

is a penis a cigar?

are a bed and a book
always in the phantom background?

do only those we do not want
press their attentions on us?

is sex inaccurately symbolized
by the color red?

does it astonish us
when the right two
want each other?

and then, what of the static and the
necessary clutter?

CRAZY JANE TALKS TO THE TOAD

he is exiting the ymca
as she is entering it.
she stops in the doorway,
so he is holding the door open for her

"why," she demands, "did they lock
the door for the single women?"
he says, "there's a separate door
for the single women?"
"why would they lock it?" the
woman repeats; "why would they lock
the door for the single women?"

he is still holding the door open
so that it doesn't slam on her.
"single women use this place also,"
she says.
"i'm sure they do," he says.

"i wish they wouldn't lock the door
the single women use," she says.

"well," he says, "i'm sure it's fine
if you use this one," and he transfers
the door gently to her grasp, thinking
that the clerks at this y truly do
earn their meagre salaries.

I'M ABOUT READY FOR THE VENERABLE BEDE

when she was a young novelist and philosopher,
iris murdoch wrote under the influence
of sartre and wittgenstein.

these days she writes under the influence
of plato.

i suspect that, as one grows a little older,
and the finitude of life becomes palpable,
one returns to those writers who have stood
the test of time, rather than squandering
one's dwindling hoard of hours
on contemporary works of questionable value.

AN ACHILLES LARYNX

he says that ezra pound
was a horrible declaimer
of his own verse,

and i think it's just as well
pound wasn't better at public speaking
or mussolini might have won the war.

WHAT WE READ AT THE END OF THE DAY

i've read just about all of
lawrence block's matthew scudder crime
novels, and a lot of those by colin dexter
featuring inspector morse. so i'm in
the market for others i'll enjoy as well.
you'd think it would be easy, but it isn't.
i try a lot of books by writers with big
reputations, like ruth rendell and ed
mc bain, and others recommended to me by
friends whose taste i trust, such as mark
weber, and i can see what others enjoy in